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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEWS RELEASE

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OHS Asks Public to Walk Smart and Ride Smart This Weekend
***Warm weather and Daylight Saving Time brings concerns of increased risk for
crashes and injuries as OHS begins pedestrian campaign***

Dover - While Delawareans look forward to their first weekend of nice weather this year, State Highway Safety officials are a bit nervous. More people are expected to be out walking, bicycling and riding motorcycles than normal because of the cold and snowy weather we've had. With an increase in people using this kind of transportation (legs or two wheels) to get around, comes an increased risk for traffic crashes.

"We want to remind drivers, who haven't been used to seeing pedestrians, bicyclists, or motorcyclists out for the last few months, to be on the lookout for them this weekend. These people are extremely vulnerable to serious injury or death if they are struck because they don't have the protection of a vehicle around them," said Andrea Summers, Community Relations Officer for the Delaware Office of Highway Safety. "At the same time we want to remind pedestrians and motorcyclists to be responsible while traveling on or near Delaware roads."

OHS is launching its 2009 Walk Smart campaign this month to help remind walkers and motorists alike of the basics of pedestrian safety. The campaign will run during the initial spring months of March and April, then resume again for July and August. Like most other OHS campaigns, it will include a mix of both enforcement and awareness activities.

In March, pedestrian safety brochures, posters, informational emails and reflective lights will be distributed throughout the state, concentrating on high pedestrian areas. Law enforcement agencies including Delaware State Police, Dover Police, Milford Police, and Newark Police will begin conducting enforcement of the state's pedestrian safety laws. Most

violations involve a base fine of \$25.00. Then in April, pedestrian safety messages will be spread through radio, billboards, and bus signage.

In 2008, 22 pedestrians were killed in motor vehicle crashes, a slight increase from 2007. Additionally, two pedestrians have already been killed in 2009. The average age of pedestrians who are killed in Delaware traffic crashes is 45 and the location of fatal crashes varies across the state, but high fatal crash areas include Wilmington, New Castle County, Milford, and Dover and parts of Western Sussex County but not the beaches like many people think.

The primary factors cited in pedestrian fatal crashes are those who are walking under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, crossing the roadway outside of designated crosswalks or intersections, walking in the roadway, or walking at night without a flashlight or reflective material.

Everyone is a pedestrian at some point and time and the public is being asked to review and follow these safety tips:

- Walking or trying to cross a road if you have alcohol and/or other drugs in your system puts you at significant risk for being killed in a crash. Plus, impaired walking, like impaired driving is illegal.
- Be Visible - It's the law that you wear reflective clothing or carry a flashlight when walking at night but people don't often think about this.
- Always cross at marked intersections or crosswalks when possible.
- Don't walk in the roadway - If no sidewalk is available, walk facing traffic and walk as far from the edge of the roadway as possible.
- If your vehicle breaks down on an interstate or busy roadway, don't leave your vehicle. Instead call #77 or 911 for assistance. Motorists can also call #77 to report a disabled vehicle they see on the roadways.

OHS also wants to remind motorcycle operators to Ride Smart this weekend or whenever they are riding. Motorcyclists are encouraged to wear protective gear including long pants, sturdy shoes, eye goggles and a helmet. Cyclists should not ride on shoulders or between vehicles to pass them. At the same time, drivers of passenger cars should keep an eye out for motorcyclists by checking for them in their blind spots before changing lanes, and watching for their approach before pulling out at intersections.

For more information on OHS's Walk Smart or Ride Smart campaigns, please visit our website at www.ohs.delaware.gov.